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ABSTRACT

Trends in teacher competency testing, test bias against minority group teachers, and ways to encourage qualified personnel to join the teaching profession are discussed. Currently, 21 states require students to pass a test to enter a teacher education program, and 31 require teacher candidates to pass a certification test. Admission tests include the Scholastic Aptitude Test, American College Testing Program, California Achievement Test, Pre-Professional Skills Test, National Teacher Examination (NTE) core battery, and state tests. Certification tests include the NTE core battery and specialty tests, and state tests such as the California Basic Educational Skills Test. Criteria for admission to a teacher education program affect enrollment patterns. Minority groups' high failure rates on teacher certification tests reflect two ominous trends: talented minority students' decreased interest in becoming teachers, and the overall decline in quality of all college graduates. A number of critics have questioned the NTE's validity in predicting effective teachers, as well as its fairness for minorities. Three steps are proposed to remedy these problems: (1) early recruitment and intensive training of minority and low income students who wish to teach; (2) selection of highly qualified teaching professionals; and (3) identification of and rewards for outstanding teachers. (GDC)

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EXCELLENCE AND EQUITY IN TEACHER COMPETENCY TESTING:

A POLICY PERSPECTIVE

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The Teacher Testing Movement

Since the National Commission on Excellence in Education issued A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform in 1983,[1] a plethora of teacher assessment laws and regulations has been enacted by the states. As of 1985, 31 states have adopted some form of testing policy for prospective teachers.[2] In most cases, as a result of their own initiative or the insistence of governors and legislatures, state departments of education have instituted a standardized examination, established a cut-off score, and prohibited teacher candidates from proceeding any further in their pursuit of a teaching career until they have passed the test. In a few instances, state education departments have mandated that licensed, working teachers pass an examination to retain their certification; and at least one state educational agency has linked merit pay increases to teacher testing.

State policies vary as to when prospective teachers must take examinations, whether basic skills and/or general, professional, or subject matter knowledge are tested, and what the minimum passing score is for a given test. Twenty-one states currently require students to pass an examination for admission into a teacher preparation program, and 31 require teacher candidates to pass a test for certification (the numbers overlap).[3] Either singly or in combination, several tests are used for admission, including the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), the American College Testing program, the California Achievement Test, the Pre-Professional Skills Test, the National Teacher Examination (NTE) Core Battery, and state-developed examinations. In the case of the SAT, minimum passing scores range from combined scores of 745 to 1,000. For certification, most states use the NTE Core Battery, the NTE Specialty Area tests and/or their own state-developed examinations. Passing scores vary. For example, the grading scale of the NTE Specialty Area Test in

Elementary School Education is 250 to 990; and the cut-off scores range from 480 to 600 points.[4]

In California, for example, prospective teachers who have not completed a study program designed to insure subject area expertise are required to score above a specific minimum cutoff score on an appropriate NTE subject area test. Since 1983, they must also take the California Basic Educational Skills Test (CBEST), which is designed to measure basic skills in mathematics, reading and writing. They must take the test for diagnostic purposes before they are permitted to student teach and must pass it prior to certification.

With varying degrees of enthusiasm, the concept of teacher testing has been accepted by members of the profession. Until recently, the National Education Association (NEA) vigorously opposed the use of tests as a criterion for teacher certification, evaluation or promotion. It has argued that standardized examinations are: 1) "biased against those who are economically disadvantaged or who are culturally and linguistically different;" 2) "invalid, unreliable, out of date and restricted to the measurement of cognitive skills;" 3) "used by book publishers and testing companies to promote their financial interests rather than to improve measurement and instruction;" and 4) "used by the media as a basis for invidious comparisons."[5] However, at its July 1985 national convention, the NEA partially reversed its longstanding position and adopted a stance in favor of requiring prospective teachers to pass valid and unbiased pedagogical and subject matter tests.

In contrast, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) has for some time actively supported the use of "accurate and appropriate measures to certify teachers."[6] Indeed, in 1985, Albert Shanker, the president of the AFT, proposed the development of a national teacher examination comparable in rigor

to those used in the legal and medical professions. He announced that the AFT is prepared to limit its membership to those who have passed such a test.[7]

Teachers at the grass roots level also appear to be receptive to testing. According to the 1984 Gallup Poll of Teachers' Attitudes Toward the Public Schools, 63 percent of the respondents expressed support for "a state board examination to prove their knowledge in the subjects they plan to teach."[8] However, rather than confidence in testing and in their own professionalism, a defensive reaction to public fears of teacher incompetence may have engendered this view among teachers.

While the concept of teacher testing seems to have gained at least the verbal endorsement of teachers and their representatives, the implementation of specific teacher testing policies remains highly problematic. For example, while state superintendents have generally advocated the use of teacher examinations, they are concerned that cutoff scores do not reflect standards of excellence. Instead, passing scores may simply represent minimal levels of proficiency that are politically acceptable and that do not threaten to reduce the supply of teachers. Evidence of a trend in this direction has been identified by the ad hoc Committee on Competency Tests and Performance Assessment of the Council of Chief State School Officers.[9]

In addition, while many deans of schools of education support teacher candidate testing as a means of improving the overall quality of their students, they pay a price for this quality increase: an immediate enrollment decline. Some have argued that the short-term fall in enrollment will be more than offset by a long-term increase in the enrollment of higher quality prospective teachers. As evidence of the benefits of this "addition by subtraction" policy, the example of the University of Oregon has been cited. Following its decision to raise admission standards, the University

experienced, for the first time in its history, a waiting list to enroll in its teacher education program.[10] What is not clear is whether Oregon actually increased the relative attractiveness of teaching vis-a-vis other programs of study for academically accomplished students or merely denied entry to students who would have been admitted under former standards. Unless teaching attracts a greater proportion of academically able students, the "addition by subtraction" argument remains unconfirmed and troublesome. For a dean of a school of education in an institution experiencing an overall enrollment decline, raising admissions standards may be risky in the face of counter pressure to relax eligibility criteria in order to boost the number of students.

At the same time, some deans of schools of education are confronted with the prospect of state policies linking teacher candidate testing to accreditation. As a result of a 1984 law, teacher preparation programs in Tennessee are placed on probation for one year if 30 percent or more of their students fail the state's basic skills test. If its 30 percent or more failure rate persists for two consecutive years, a teacher training program's accreditation is revoked. In Florida, a similar law resulted in 18 out of the state's 25 teacher training institutions losing state approval of one or more of their educational programs.[11] This punitive approach misplaces accountability for educational malpractice. Developing the basic skills of prospective teachers is not a focus of teacher preparation programs but of K-12 and undergraduate education as a whole.

Furthermore, other professional schools are not subject to a similar fate when a large proportion of their students fail licensure examinations. For example, in California, the failure rate for the February sitting of the state bar examination is usually around 72 percent. While the state bar does rank

California law schools according to their student passing rate for some purposes, no one has suggested that a law school should have its accreditation revoked because of the relatively poor showing of some of its students on the bar examination.

While law students are seen as individually responsible for acquiring a considerable body of skills and knowledge prior to entry into a true profession characterized by autonomous decision making, the common perception is that teacher candidates are products molded by their schools, given a veneer of competency, and sent into a semiprofession highly constrained by governors, legislatures, state and local commissions and boards, superintendents, and principals. Consequently, while lawyers and law schools are accorded high status, teachers and schools of education are not.

Correspondingly, while the public assumes that law schools can be trusted to operate in accordance with free market principles---competing with each other for the best students with state bar pass rates as the indicator of success---it views teacher training institutions with suspicion. Teacher training institutions, it is presumed, are likely to recruit---off the street as it were---just about anyone, with little regard for the impact on their own effectiveness as educational enterprises or on the quality of the nation's teaching force. Although this exaggeration is rarely true, it has been true enough, often enough, for many policy makers, both outside and inside the educational establishment to lose confidence in teacher training institutions.

For more than 125 years, states have used tests to screen unqualified persons from teaching. In fact, teacher testing was predominant until the 1920's and 1930's when educational reformers urged that tests be abandoned in favor of rigorous teacher preparation by first rate teaching schools and colleges.[12] With the revival of teacher testing as a critical issue in

contemporary educational reform, it is therefore incumbent upon schools and colleges of education to boldly strengthen and improve their programs. Revitalization and innovation are necessary if teacher training institutions are to insure their own viability and if teaching professionals are to meet standards of excellence. The status and prospects of teacher education and the teaching profession are inextricably connected.[13]

The Impact of Testing on Minorities

With greater reliance on both student and teacher testing, the longstanding controversy surrounding use of standardized examinations has intensified. Among those most reluctant to sanction widespread use of standardized tests are individuals and groups concerned about the disparate impact of the examinations on prospective teachers from minority backgrounds.

According to the Commission on Teacher Credentialing, of 6,644 minority candidates who took the first California CBEST exam in 1983, 3,854, or 58 percent, failed. The highest failure rate was among Blacks. Of the 2,040 Blacks who took the exam, only 530 were able to proceed with their plans to be teachers, a paltry 26 percent. For other minority groups, the test results were not much better. Only 834 out of 2,133, or 39 percent, of Mexican Americans passed, and only 50 percent, or 637 out of 1,259 Asian Americans passed the CBEST exam. In comparison, the passing rate for Whites was 76 percent, with 18,856 of the 24,540 Whites passing.[14]

The pass rates elsewhere are no more encouraging. Of a total of 5,500 teachers certified in Florida in 1981, only 200 were Black. This low number was mirrored in the pass rates on Florida's Teacher Competency Examination, given for the first time in 1983. While 90% of White candidates passed the examination, only 35% of Black candidates, 51% of Hispanic candidates and 63% of Asian candidates passed.[15]

The first administration of the Texas testing program for prospective teachers eliminated 84% of the Black candidates and 65% of the Hispanic candidates on the basis of the mathematics examination. 87% of the Black candidates and 65% of the Hispanic candidates failed the reading test; and 80% of the Black candidates and 56% of the Hispanic candidates failed the writing test.[16]

The problems associated with these high minority failure rates are made all the more serious by the increasing need for qualified Black, Hispanic and Asian American teachers at a time of rapid demographic change. California data illustrate the national trend. In the 1981-82 school year, the state's total public school population was 56.4% non-Hispanic White. In grades K-3, the majority of the state's public school pupils were non-White: 34.1% were Hispanic; 9.1% were Black; 6.8% were Asian or Pacific Islander; and 0.8% were American Indian. It is projected that more than 50% of the state's total public school population will be non-White by 1995. If California's public schools indeed become more than 50% non-White, they will join the schools in the nation's 35 largest city school districts, the majority of which now have overwhelmingly minority student enrollments. Needless to say, the combination of high minority failure rates on teacher examinations and high minority pupil enrollment rates, if unchecked by dramatic interventions, could result in a high degree of tension between minority parents and a largely non-minority teaching staff. A conflict between communities and schools, similar to that which plagued public education during the 1960's in many of the nation's major urban areas, could ensue.

The rates of failure on teacher examinations reflect two ominous trends. First, interest in teaching on the part of many well educated students, especially talented minority students, has declined precipitously in the last

15 years. As the teacher surplus of the 1970's drastically reduced job opportunities, college students increasingly chose other majors. Moreover, as new career opportunities outside education have opened up for them, the best and brightest minority and women students, who earlier might have entered teaching, have chosen other fields. The proportion of college-bound students who indicated they intended to major in education fell from 24% in 1969 to less than 5% in 1982. The decline has been particularly evident among highly qualified minorities and women.

Second, colleges and universities are failing to guarantee that their graduates, both minority and non-minority, can read with comprehension, write literately, and perform routine mathematical computations. This trend is but an overt manifestation of the general failure of many colleges and universities to exercise proper leadership and authority over their educational programs. The Association of American Colleges, in its report Integrity in the College Curriculum: A Report to the Academic Community, maintains that decline and devaluation are evident everywhere. Moreover,

> there is so much confusion as to the mission of the American college and university that it is no longer possible to be sure why a student should take a particular program of courses. Is the curriculum an invitation to philosophic and intellectual growth or a quick exposure to the skills of a particular vocation? Or is it both? Certainty on such matters disappeared under the impact of new knowledge and electives in the late nineteenth century. The subsequent collapse of structure and control in the course of study has invited the intrusion of programs of ephemeral knowledge developed without concern for the criteria of self-discovery, critical thinking and exploration of values that were for so long central to the baccalaureate years. The curriculum has given way to a marketplace philosophy: it is a supermarket where students are shoppers and professors are merchants of learning. Fads and fashions, the demands of popularity and success, enter where wisdom and experience should prevail. Does it make sense for a college to offer a thousand courses to a student who will only take 36?
>
> The marketplace philosophy refuses to establish common expectations and norms. Another victim of this posture of irresponsibility is the general education of the American college undergraduate, the institutional course requirements outside the major. They lack a rationale and cohesion or,

> even worse, are almost lacking altogether. Electives are being used to fatten majors and diminish breadth. It is as if no one cared, so long as the store stays open.[17]

If this trend persists---and make no mistake about it, it will as long as colleges and universities, ignoring the implications of the findings contained in Integrity in the College Curriculum, continue to permit unknowledgeable students to chart their own intellectual development---the situation will only deteriorate further. Unaided by the collective intelligence of the academic community and lacking a commitment by higher education institutions to the improvement of the attractiveness of the teaching profession, the supply of talented, well-educated minority teachers will continue to nosedive.

In Florida, where applicants for teacher training programs must score a minimum of 835 on the SAT, Professor Walter A. Mercer of Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, a historically Black college supported by the state, predicts that "future teachers from [minority] groups could become vanishing breeds."[18] In Texas, where candidates for certification must pass reading, writing, and mathematics tests, researchers estimate that by 1988, 96% of Black candidates and 84% of Hispanic candidates will be denied permission to teach on the basis of their reading tests alone. They also project that minority representation in the national teaching force could be reduced to less than 5% by 1990, if the currently observable trend in pass rates continues unabated and if rates of attrition through retirements and teacher burnout are unchanged.[19]

These figures are both disturbing and unacceptable. They have a devastating effect on young adults who have a strong desire to build a career for themselves by educating our children. Their impact is also to deny minority groups access to exemplars of success. Moreover, there is the awful possibility that minority youth, upon learning that many prospective minority teachers

are judged not good enough to teach, will lose confidence in their own abilities and conclude that higher education is off limits to them.

The first reaction of many to the apparent negative relationship between testing and the potential supply of minority teachers is to claim "racism" and to insist that alternate certification standards be adopted for minority candidates. Certainly, if the implication of this connection is ignored, there is the real possibility that the promise of democracy and the promise of equality will be placed, yet again, in deep jeopardy. The question remains whether this prospect necessarily rules out the use of proficiency tests.

In Favor of Competency Testing of Minority Candidates

Many insights into the need for proficiency testing are gained by analyzing the analagous arguments advanced by sociologist Harry Edwards of the University of California, Berkeley, regarding Rule 48 of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). The passage of this rule sparked "what is probably the most heated race-related controversy within the NCAA since the onset of widespread racial integration in major college sports programs during the 1950's and 1960's."[20] Effective in 1986, the rule requires freshmen who want to participate in sports at any of the nation's 277 Division I colleges and universities to have attained a minimum combined SAT score of 700 or a composite score of 15 on the American College Test (ACT). In addition, they must have achieved a C average in eleven specific high school courses, including English, mathematics, social sciences and physical sciences.[21]

The response of many Black educators to Rule 48 was sharp and immediate. Some were angered because they were not consulted in the formulation of the new policy; others claimed that the SAT minimum score was set arbitrarily. Still others stated that the SAT and the ACT are racist diagnostic tests,

biased in favor of White students, and that the proposed cutoffs impose unfair penalties on Black athletes.

In contrast, Edwards took a stand supporting the enforcement of Rule 48. He agreed that the determination of the cut-off scores may well have been arbitrary, but found them so arbitrarily low as to constitute no standard at all. Edwards stated:

> Further, were I not to support Rule 48, I would risk communicating to Black youth in particular that I, a nationally known Black educator, do not believe that they have the capacity to achieve a 700 score on the SAT, with three years to prepare for the test, when they are given a total of 400 points simply for answering a single question in each of the two sections of the test, and when they have a significant chance of scoring 460 by a purely random marking of the test. Finally, I support the NCAA's action because I believe that Black parents, Black educators and the Black community must insist that Black children be taught and that they learn whatever subject matter is necessary to excel on diagnostic and all other skills tests.[22]

The argument of Edwards is both compelling and persuasive. However, it is also incomplete. It is clear that if Edward's view is to be translated into policy, support of minimum competency rules must be coupled with insistence that minority children receive a sufficiently high quality education necessary to enable them to score competitively on examinations from SAT, to CBEST, to NTE. It is also clear that state public officials, in and out of the education establishment, must commit themselves to develop, fund, vigorously monitor and intelligently evaluate targeted school improvement programs so that minority students at all levels can become more competitive on all examinations of scholastic achievement.

This position does not assume that standardized examinations are problem-free or totally unbiased. Clearly, there is no evidence that the teacher tests currently being used have predictive validity.[23] They do not discriminate between those who will become effective or ineffective teachers. Some individuals who pass the tests will indeed become incompetent teachers. This

caveat must be brought to the forefront of policy discussions concerning teacher testing.

There is also evidence that current tests are lacking in content validity. The present NTE Core Battery, for example, was designed by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) with the assistance of panels of teacher educators and teaching practitioners who were asked to judge the face validity of the test items.[24] While ETS adhered to strict standards of test quality and fairness and asked independent groups, including the NEA and the AFT, to select multiracial panel members, there are two main problems with this approach.

First, the Core Battery is purported to represent a consensus among educators as to the knowledge important to an entry level teacher.[25] However, in fact, there is little agreement among practitioners and researchers as to what beginning teachers need to know. The judgments of ETS panelists about test item validity may therefore have been situational, subjective and idiosyncratic. In implicit recognition of this probability, ETS requires each state that chooses to administer the NTE to conduct its own content validity study. However, this policy does not increase confidence in the NTE's validity. Using the same basic methodology described above, ETS itself has conducted 60% (21) of the state studies.[26] While as many as 38% of the test items have been identified as invalid for a given state,[27] the NTE has not been modified accordingly but continues to be administered as originally designed.

Second, the content of the Core Battery appears to be more closely related to the curricula of teacher preparation programs than to the competency of effective beginning teachers. According to ETS, the tests "were developed to provide information about a candidate's knowledge and skills, typically acquired through a teacher-training program."[28] Especially in light of the manifest need to reform teacher education programs, it cannot be assumed that

the objectives and content of teacher training curricula reflect the proficiency areas or levels possessed by capable entry level teachers. That this concern has substance is supported by ETS's recent undertaking of a job analysis study involving 16,000 practicing teachers.[29] Presumably, the results will be used to increase the job relatedness of the NTE.

David Owen, in his 1985 critique of the ETS, suggests that the present NTE's lack of relevance to the workplace constitutes grounds for the abandonment of the examination. Since the Pre-Professional Skills Test seems to be an abbreviated version of the NTE, he advises states to avoid this examination as well. Owen further asserts that the quality of the teaching profession is in fact reduced by the NTE in that its relationship to teacher training curricula reinforces the mediocrity of such programs. He states that the "easiest way to improve on the NTE would be to get rid of it."[30]

However, this is a simplistic and unrealistic response to a complicated issue. Tests which do have content validity and which are properly used can perform a useful function in assessing teacher competency. The development of better tests, then, is the appropriate public policy priority.

In addition to validity issues, some teacher tests have been questioned on the basis of potential bias in favor of or against particular groups, racial, socioeconomic, and other. Bias can be difficult to substantiate, and the elimination of test bias can be equally problematic.

In 1981, for example, a class action suit was filed against the Alabama State Board of Education on the grounds that the state's teacher competency testing program discriminated against Blacks and violated their constitutional and statutory civil rights.[31] One provision of the multifaceted consent decree in favor of the plaintiffs required the state to delete test questions that showed Black/White performance differentials of more than 15%.[32] If

implemented, this remedy might have resulted in the deletion of a large number of test items, an action that would have removed race bias while simultaneously distorting the job relatedness of the testing program. Since the job relatedness of the test appears to have been carefully established---the test developer, National Evaluation Systems, Inc., consulted more than 5,000 Alabama teachers---the net gain to the plaintiffs on the issue of test revision might have been minimal. This dilemma may have been a factor in the presiding judge's decision to vacate the consent decree in February 1986.

The case for the class bias of some of the currently used tests is less clouded. Allan Nairn says of the SAT, "In sum, it is advertised as a test of scholastic aptitude...used by colleges to accept and reject applicants ostensibly on the basis of merit. For many students, the SAT may be more a reflection of their social class than of their potential for accomplishment inside or beyond the classroom."[33] Mary Frances Berry furthers this argument with her assertion that the major differential among SAT test scores is "not between Black and White students, but between students from well-off families and students from poor families. The better off the family, the higher the score---for Whites and Blacks."[34] Indeed, the College Board's 1983 report Profiles, College-Bound Seniors,[35] shows exactly that. The relationship between family income and SAT test scores is highly significant. While not as high, the relationship between level of parental education and SAT scores of high school seniors is also very substantial.

On the question of test fairness, Banesh Hoffman goes even further in maintaining that the SAT is biased against everyone with a penetrating mind. Of the SAT's multiple choice format, he observes:

> "How genuinely difficult, how worthy of first-rate minds, can questions be for which answers must be picked at the rate of one every minute or so, or in some cases, at the rate of a hundred an hour? How deeply can such questions probe and still be machine-gradable? And if the questions

did indeed have depth, how could one reasonably expect the candidates to give well-considered responses to them so quickly? Is it likely that students who can maintain a lively interest in long successions of small, efficient conundrums are those with deep minds, or even those with an adult set of values?"[36]

From Analysis To Policy

Clearly, there must be vigilance in insuring the proper use of standardized tests in assessing the competency of potential teachers. The testing industry must be persuaded to revise and design tests that are both unbiased and valid. Where necessary, legal action should be strongly considered as an avenue for testing reform and policy change. There must also be full understanding what standardized tests can and cannot do. To quote Washington Post columnist William Raspberry, standardized tests cannot:

> measure patience, love of children and learning, the ability to maintain order and a hundred other things that make up teacher competency. But the tests can measure whether a teacher has learned the basics of pedagogic techniques (which we consider important, else why would we mandate education courses for teachers?) and whether a teacher has a solid grasp of the material to be taught...[37]

This view is strongly endorsed. While tests cannot be relied upon to identify who has the personal warmth, caring, drive and dedication required of a good teacher, they can provide some reliable information about the basic competencies of a pool of applicants. Further, good standardized tests, more than measuring potential aptitude, indicate what students have learned; they also show how well students are able to apply their learning to what the test asks of them.

The question remains, however, how do we break the cycle of minority failure on teacher tests? Again, William Raspberry has insight into the crux of the problem: "...the reason minority applicants fare worse on the tests than Whites is that they themselves are victims of inferior schooling."[38] Therefore, what teacher test results indicate is that the education of our children, especially those from minority and low income families, must be

improved. Rejecting what Arnold M. Gallegos, Dean of the College of Education at Northern Arizona University, correctly describes as our historical tendency to "blame the victims" for their failure on examinations,[39] we must instead focus on the reform of the educational institutions which prepare our students.

A priority in this effort is to increase the financial allocations made to colleges and schools of education. An underlying cause of the low minority pass rates on teacher competency tests are inequities in the resources devoted to teacher training institutions, particularly historically Black colleges. Ipso facto, resource-poor teacher colleges and schools of education, no matter how high the innate ability of their students, are disadvantaged in providing the breadth, intensity and level of education needed by future teachers. If higher education institutions are strengthened, then the skills and knowledge of future teachers will be advanced.

In California, the most recent pass rates on the CBEST augur well for the potential benefits of maintaining minimum teacher competency standards while focusing on educational reform. In 1985, 33% of Black examinees passed the test, a figure seven percent higher than the 1983 number cited earlier. Among Mexican Americans, the pass rate was 46%, also a seven percent improvement. Representing a six percent increase, 56% of Asian Americans met minimum competency standards. Among Whites, 81% passed, five percent more than in 1983.[40] These figures suggest that higher education institutions and teacher candidates have recognized the implications of past CBEST scores, conducted self-evaluations and made decisions that have led to higher quality programs and higher quality students.

If note is taken of Henry Levin's provocative finding that each additional point scored by teachers on their SAT verbal subtest can be translated into

a net gain of .175 points on the verbal scores of Black students and .179 on the verbal scores of White students,[41] then there is even more impetus to provide educational settings that will give all students the same chance at passing teacher credentialing examinations, regardless of their racial or socioeconomic backgrounds.

Direct action must be taken to provide all students in our public schools with quality education that is responsive to their real needs. This effort depends on the existence of well qualified teachers, including well qualified minority teachers. To meet this challenge, while also maintaining and improving standards of excellence, the pool of qualified minority teachers must be enlarged.

All of the knowledge and skills that are tested in competency examinations are learnable. Students can achieve acceptable test scores if they are taught what they need to know. This means teaching all of the skills and understanding that they will require to function well in the contemporary world and to be prepared to make the best adaptations and choices in their lives as they move into the future.

Towards this end, a comprehensive proposal is offered. While it will bring a transitional period of short-run disappointment for some who will be locked out of the teacher training programs they wish to enter, the plan will finally put a stop to "victim blaming" measures that have created more problems each time they have been applied in place of long-range, well articulated solutions. The proposal consists of three steps: the early recruitment and intensive training of minority and low income students who have a commitment to teaching; the implementation of improved teacher selection policies; and the identification and reward of outstanding teachers.

Step One: The Early Recruitment and Intensive Training of Minority and Low Income Students Who Wish to Teach

As early as high school, students who have expressed interest in teaching as a career would be selected to participate in a special university pre-professional teacher preparation program. The program would consist of a five-year course of study leading to the bachelor's degree and would provide a series of paid school year and summer teaching-related internships. In addition to the traditional criteria of grades and past achievements, program admission standards would consider potential for growth and an exceptionally strong willingness to learn. Special efforts would be made to attract students with a background or interest in areas of special need, such as mathematics and science or language and literacy.

Upon entry into the program, optimally with entry into college, students would be given a series of criterion-referenced tests for diagnostic purposes. In conjunction with their regular course load, the students would be enrolled in a series of self-paced tutorials to work on basic skills development in those areas where their diagnostic tests indicate attention is needed. These tutorials would be an integral part of a substantive undergraduate liberal arts program. They would be designed to do away with troublesome conditions such as those identified in Stanley Ivie's analysis of Black student achievement on the NTE.

Ivie notes that Black students perform poorly on the NTE because the examination is as much a reading test as a subject matter test. Consequently, many Black students cannot perform well on the test because of inadequate reading skills. Ivie observes that most Black students have not "mastered the basics" prior to entering college; moreover, colleges do little to correct the situation because of an insufficient emphasis on the teaching of writing and

policies that allow students to avoid liberal arts courses that have substance or rigor.[42] Given such circumstances, it is sadly understandable why tests taken at the end of college too often show poor results.

In response to these needs, the proposed developmental program would focus at the undergraduate level on reading skills, basic mathematics operations, with heavy emphasis on reasoning skills, manipulations, application and good, clear writing. Since the students would at the same time be enrolled in subject matter courses that require these skills, they would have sufficient opportunities to practice the skills as they are developing and to receive continuous feedback as they utilize new skills in their course work. At the end of two years, the students would take a series of tests to measure their growth. A new set of self-paced tutorials, based upon their current skill levels, would be developed and the process would be repeated on a higher level. The students would also take practice versions of the required teacher licensing examinations.

The licensing tests themselves should not be used as diagnostic tools. There have been problems in using the CBEST for this purpose. Richard Watkins, CBEST consultant to the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, notes that far greater demands are made on a test to be used for diagnosis than for determining proficiency, since a diagnostic test must "yield reliable measurement over a continuum of skill or ability and provide reliable scores on several reasonably different skills and subskills." Watkins cautions that tests such as the CBEST can only make the most general predictions about outcomes and cannot be used for prescription on the basis of their results alone.[43] This explains the lack of success for those who have failed the CBEST and attempt to use their test results as a basis of preparation for re-examination. The candidates who have done this have been frustrated and

angered by their lack of progress. The approach recommended above would avoid this situation by providing accurate diagnostic tools combined with practice on the actual test to gain familiarity with and confidence in standardized test taking.

Upon satisfactory completion of the undergraduate program and the conferral of the bachelor's degree, students would be guaranteed admission to participating colleges and universities (for example, the California State University teacher education programs or the University of California Graduate Schools of Education). Graduate scholarships covering the full costs of student fees and filing expenses would be provided to all entering students with an undergraduate grade point average of B+ or better. Partial tuition scholarships would be available to those with a B average. The students would, of course, also have access to regular financial aid programs. Again, as in the first phase of this program, paid internships would be provided to all qualified students for the duration of their graduate teacher training studies.

Given present realities, several things will have to be changed before we can proceed realistically with this program---and only one of them involves raising the competency level of future teachers. To attract and retain the best and brightest applicants, society must accord them the same status given to young professionals in other career fields. Only then will the public have the right to expect high level professional performance and long-range staying power from them. In terms of the minority and low-income candidates who must be recruited, the polity will have to affirm its national commitment to quality education and underwrite, through federal and state contributions, the creation of excellence. This would require incentives to potential teachers in the form of scholarships and loans with forgiveness provisions based upon

number of years of service as a teacher. To attract good people, it is also necessary to make serious efforts to bring teaching salaries into the professional range. In California, this process has just begun the process. Many hope that it is not too little too late.

Step Two: The Selection of Highly Qualified Teaching Professionals

Despite the current situation---that of being at the end of a period of an oversupply of teachers---teacher personnel policies would be redesigned based upon the recommendations made in my report Race, Ethnicity and Equal Employment Opportunity: An Investigation of Access to Employment and Assignment of Professional Personnel in New York City's Public Schools.[44]

First, any existing "alternative" teacher selection policies would be terminated. Although such programs may have been successful in increasing minority employment opportunities, they have operated as racial conduits, steering newly hired minority teachers into almost exclusively minority schools. Given minority teacher applicants who have undergone rigorous training, the rationale for alternative selection policies would disappear. There would be significant advances toward reversing the persistent pattern in which teachers with fewer years of experience, less advanced training and lower salaries are assigned to schools with high proportions of minority and low income pupils. As soon as these teachers gain enough seniority to do so, they move on to "better" schools populated with middle and high income students. This phenomenon would be offset by the development of systems of equal employment opportunity goals and plans that integrate school faculties and show all school children that both quality education and the achievement of high test scores are functions of many factors, but that group membership is no longer one of them.

Second, traditional systems for the selection and evaluation of new teachers would be replaced with ones that encourage personnel officials to match the needs of students in the public schools more closely with the talents of potential teachers in the applicant pool. The effectiveness of our school systems will not be found in the statistics on the racial composition of our teaching staffs, but rather in the statistics reflecting our students' mastery of basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic. Nevertheless, it must be understood that proportional minority participation in the career of teaching and high quality outcomes in terms of student learning are not at odds with each other. There is no such thing as a choice between equity and excellence. There is no equity in the absence of excellence.

Step Three: Identifying and Rewarding Outstanding Teachers

In addition to existing teacher tests, a new one would be designed and implemented: an examination to be taken after a minimum of three years of practice in a full-time public school teaching position. This test would measure: 1) subject matter competency; 2) knowledge of learning theory, that is, ability to diagnose accurately student needs in terms of skill level and social development and to match those needs with appropriate learning experiences, materials and methods; 3) ability to monitor progress of students in a systematic way, utilizing several feedback mechanisms; 4) ability to create well balanced lessons that vary activities and build progressively from facts to concepts to valuing and evaluating, thus giving students opportunities for and experiences in raising their thinking and reasoning skills; and 5) ability to evaluate accurately student progress in a manner that is consistent with stated goals and objectives and that involves students as active participants in the evaluation process.

Such a test would be to teaching what the Certified Public Accountant's examination is to accounting. As such, it would be entirely voluntary. Only those who wished to take the test for purposes of professional advancement would do so. It is also strongly recommended that the test be made optional on a nationwide basis. This would have the added benefit of opening up the job market for master level teachers. Outstanding educators who find themselves in dead end positions in their own school districts could seek advancement not only outside their district, but also outside their state. Such open competition would work for the benefit of all concerned. Areas experiencing growth would have an excellent pool from which to select, while teachers who are seeking advancement in their career goals would not have to leave teaching in order to progress professionally. These master level teachers would be compensated accordingly, just as CPA-level accountants are.

Of course, individual states and local school districts could supplement the national examination with locally designed sections, reflecting state concerns and priorities. For example, a state with a large limited-English-speaking pupil population might want to emphasize the importance of teachers being expert in this area, while other states might emphasize other areas of great need.

In addition to promoting teacher professionalism by encouraging and rewarding teachers who have objectively demonstrated superior skills as educators, the introduction of a CPA-like examination for teachers would also place teachers and the general polity in a more strategically advantageous position to press colleges and universities to undertake reforms that would improve the educational enterprise at all levels. In particular, teachers and policy makers would have the leverage to persuade the higher education establishment to think more systematically about the process of teaching (knowledge

transmission) and learning (knowledge acquisition) in particular disciplines.[45]

Traditionally, disciplinary departments, for example, departments of physics, English and mathematics, have not directed many of their resources or energies toward the examination of how students learn specific subject matter, what difficulties they face in learning how to think abstractly, what preconceptions they bring with them to the classroom, what instructional approaches are most effective for particular types of students, and how best to take full advantage of the potential of computer-based intelligent tutoring systems. The very promise of a CPA-like exam for teachers, covering what teachers should know about teaching and learning in particular subject areas, would vastly improve the linkages between teachers in the schools and teachers in colleges and universities. Here again, the report, Integrity in the College Curriculum, speaks truth to established wisdom:

> If departments, particularly research departments, allocated one or two regular faculty positions to research on learning their discipline, they could produce results which would improve their own teaching effectiveness and would have visibility and impact beyond the walls of their own institutions. They would influence instructional materials at the secondary as well as the college level. And they could educate young researchers who would continue the enterprise and propagate it to institutions where it does not yet exist.[46]

Conclusion

During the transitional period towards the implementation of this proposal, it is undeniable that there will be disappointment for those who fail teacher competency tests. However, given the proper use of well constructed, correctly standardized measures, tests for prospective teachers are necessary for the development of the teaching profession and beneficial to the education of our young. If there is indeed a national commitment to quality education for all, as a part of our dedication to the principles of equality, then suggestions to change the requirements to fit the present median performance

of minority teacher candidates will be ignored. Rather, the desired performance level will be retained, valid and unbiased tests will be developed, and minority students will be provided with the kinds of support and training that will make it possible for them to garner the learning and experience needed to pass the examinations for entry into and exit from teaching credential programs. The know-how to do all this exists; all that is needed now is to affirm the belief that a quality system of education will be attained only when there is equality of outcome in basic skills across economic as well as racial lines.

Teaching, the transmission of thought from one mind to others, traditions and values from one generation to the next, is one of the most important activities of the human race. It is the one skill whose absence prevents magnificent successes and guarantees startling failures. Lacking good teaching, genius is struck dumb, poverty is made permanent, power is likely to be brutal and culture doomed to be channeled into mind-forged ruts. Lack of teaching results in squabbling, atomistic tribes, each one pursuing narrow objectives, unable to identify with the aspirations of anyone outside of the group. Good teaching enables and enobles, providing society with the tools necessary for self-perpetuation and self-renewal. To put forth the argument that minority youngsters, the most disadvantaged of the poor, and the least able to emancipate themselves from their impoverished surroundings, should be taught by our less-than-best teachers is to stand the idea of justice on its head. As admirable and important as is the goal of increasing the ranks of minority teachers, this objective must not be put before the more fundamental objective of securing good teaching for those who need it the most.

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